

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Fairness and neutrality, although subjective and very difficult to attain, should be THE standard for media channels. So many media outlets do not do a very good job of that, which places all the more importance on preventing media conglomeration so we have at least, a diversity of biased views. The anti-Kerry documentary is clearly a biased production and the only way I could see it being fair and neutral, and not an overt effort to influence the election, is if Sinclair insisted on airing an alternative pro-Kerry or anti-Bush documentary. But even that is a compromise. A stronger role for the FCC would be to prevent media conglomerates from mandating programming of a political sort to its networks. To have media conglomerates practicing political activism exacerbates and illustrates the problem of having media conglomerates in the first place.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.